

TIRUMALAI ANANTALVAN
A BIOGRAPHY

MADHURAKAVI ALVAR & ANANTALVAN
TIRUPATI



THIRUMALAI
ANANTHALVAN
A Biography

Originally in Sanskrit

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Sthalacarya Purusha

Tamil Version and Introduction

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SRI VENKATESWARA - TIRUMALAI

अखिलभुवनजन्मस्थेमभंगादिलीले
विनतविविधभूतव्रातरक्षैकदीक्षे ।
श्रुतिशिरसि विदीप्ते ब्रह्मणि श्रीनिवासे
भवतु मम परस्मिन् शेमुषी भक्तिरूपा ।।

Akhilabhuvanjanmasthemabhangadilile / vanajan
vinatavividhabhutavrataraksaikadikse
srutisirasividipte brahmani srinivase
bhavatu mama parsmin semusi bhaktirupa / paras



सर्वगन्ध इति ख्यातः श्रुत्यन्ते वेंकटेश्वरः ।
यत्समर्पितमाल्यौघैः अनन्तार्याय मंगळम् ।।



Sri U. Ve. Mahavidvan
Purisai Srirangachariar Swami
TIRUPATI

The Man of Courage

The title was given by Ramanuja to Ananthalvan who accepted to go to Tirumalai and cultivate the flower garden-nandavanam to serve the Lord Venkatesvara.Thousand years back, Tirumalai was a deep forest. It was not congenial for human habitation. There were ferocious animals like tigers and leopards, snakes and various poisonous reptiles. Only Ananthalvan had the courage to come and cultivate the garden there. Ramanuja appreciated this and called him as Anpillai -i.e Courageous man. Hence the successors came to be called Anantha-anpillai.

When we look at the main deity viz Lord Venkatesvara in the Garbhagriha we find the application of Pacchaikarpuram (Medicated Camphor) at the chin. There is an anecdote in this regard. Ananthalvan was digging the tank and his wife was helping him. She picked up the dug-up earth and put it away at a distance. She was in an advanced state of pregnancy and was finding this task very difficult. A brahmachari came to her rescue and asked her to give the pan to him so that he would dump it at a distance. When Ananthalvan saw his wife returning so quickly, he asked her and she told that a brahmachari was helping her to throw away the mud. Ananthalvan was angry with the interruption of the stranger and he threw the spade at him. It hit the chin and the blood oozed. When archakas opened the temple, they found that the Lord was bleeding at the chin.The archakas then applied pacchaikarpuram and the bleeding stopped. The practice still continues.

Ananthalvan’s garden is in the left side of the temple where Ananthalvan breathed the last. Lord Venkatesvara every year on this day visits the place and offers special honour to the tree under which Ananthalvan expired.

There is another important historical aspect in Ananthalvan Valitttirunamam. Malaiyil Venkatavarku Mamanar Valiye. That means let him live long, who is the father in law of Venkatesa. This gives a clue by which we can get the

development of the Tricchanur Padmavati Temple from the time of Ananthalvan. This is a good topic for research. This Ananthalvan Caritam which we present to the scholars will help the research scholars to examine the growth of Srivaishnavism in Karnataka and Andhra in addition to Tamilnadu.

K.K.A.Venkatachari

Thirumalai Ananthalwan

Selfless Service to the Lord

Millions of devotees throng the Tirumala Hills practically round the clock throughout the year. As the rush of pilgrims increases day by day, Tirumalai Tirupathi Devastanam is hard put to finding ways and means of accommodating them and arranging darshan without long wait. As they move towards the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Venkateswara, how many will remember that there was a time, just a thousand years back, when the Hills were deserted with not much of human habitation in sight ? Ask any Srivaishnavite to name the man of millennium. Pat will come the reply, Saint Ramanuja.

Ramanuja (1017-1137 A.D.) had visited the Hills thrice. His maternal uncle, Peria Thirumalai Nambi gave him discourses on the Ramayana for several months at the Hills. The temple and the surroundings were in bad shape and worship was not organized regularly. Ramanuja was inspired by the Holy Hymns of the Alwars singing the glory of the Lord of the Seven Hills. He called an assembly of the Acharyas, 74 in number and posed them the question whether any one of them will take up the task of serving the Lord on the Hills on a day to day basis. Everyone was hesitating, fearing the hard life up the Hills what with tigers, malaria and the forests. There was Anantharya, a strong and silent devotee in the gathering. He rose to his feet and prayed, “Beloved Acharya! Bestow the blessing of serving the Lord of the Seven Hills on this humble self. With your grace, I will be happy to undertake this service. ”Ramanuja was mightily pleased and embracing Anantharya declared before the congregation, “Anantharya , You are truly the man (Aanpillai). Anantharya chose to settle down on the Hills in fulfillment of the command of the Guru and went on to lay the garden of flowers dug up the lake and named it after Ramanuja.Anantharya was so much obsessed with zealous personal service to the Lord that on one occasion, he hit with a crowbar a young man who was trying to help his wife in laying the garden.

Anantharya was chasing him when the young man disappeared into the temple. The priests found blood oozing from the chin of the Lord as Anantharya entered the sanctum santorum. He applied camphor on the chin and prayed for forgiveness. The crowbar can even today be seen at the entrance of the temple as a memento to the dedicated devotion of Anantharya. The camphor is distributed as Prasad {Sri padarenu}

Anantharya was actually born in Siruputtur near Mysore and drawn towards Ramanuja by his magnetic personality. During the second visit up the Hills, Saint Ramanuja went round the garden laid down by Ananthasuri and was delighted to find the garden thick with vakula, patala, pannaga, shenbaga and other flower bearing fragrant trees. The bunches of flowers hanging from the branches entertaining the ears of pilgrims with strains of music poured forth by bees and all kinds of plumaged birds.Saint Ramanuja remembered how on the first occasion, he had given the call to Ananthasuri, at the time of discourse on Nammalwar's hymns referring to the Lord as residing in flower bedecked Venkata Hills (Sindhupoo maghizhum Thiruvengadam)He called Anantharya and declared in the August presence of Peria Thirumalai Nambigal," O Anantharya !Having nursed Thee, I now reap the fruit."

Anantha Suri was some sort of chronicler. His Venkatachala Ithihasamala represents to Tirupati what Koil Olugu is to Srirangam .The Holy Triumvirate of Saint Ramanuja,Anantharya and Peria Thirumalai Nambigal at a conference at the third visit of Ramanuja set up the Pedda Jeeyangar Mutt to regulate the Vaikanasa aagama form of worship. The Saint began his Sri Bashya with an invocation to the Lord as Brahmani Srinivasa. This was a free Sanskrit rendering of Nammalwar's famouns hymn addressing
the Lord as "Alaremelmangai Urai Marba"

Epigraphs TT 171-173 and 175 on the Tirumalai Hills show Ananthalwan's dedication to Saint Ramanuja. His word was gospel to him. Whatever was dear

to Ramanuja was dearer to Ananthalvan. He prays to Ramanuja to bless him with the noble spirit to imbibe the teachings of Nammalwar. His devotion to Andal was so great that on one occasion he was seen diving deep down the Srivilliputtur temple tank to search for the remnants of holy turmeric if any used by Andal He composed the Ramanuja Chatusloki showing how Srirangam,The Tirumalai Hills, Kanchi and Melkote were dear to Ramanuja. His Gotha Chatusloki is a work of great art, rich in lines whose depth of thought, warmth of feeling, glow of imagery and grace of phrases will ring for centuries in every land where the glory of Andal is cherished.

Bhattar, the successor to Saint Ramanuja at Srirangam, once sent a disciple to Ananthalwann to ascertain who a true Vaishnava was. Ananthalvan told the Brahmin from Srirangam," A true Sir Vaishnavite is like a crane, like a cock, like salt. He will be like you,". Bhattar later on explained the four different ideas of Ananthalwan. The Srivaishnava ignores ordinary mortals and awaits the arrival of a true Gnani so that he may surrender to that Mahatama through devotion to service. Not for him the different parts of the Vedas which are not always of universal appeal. Like the cock picking up the good grains from the chaff, the Vaishnava will swear by the Dravida Veda of Nammalwar. Just as the salt dissolves itself in food and becomes useful thereby, the Srivaishnava effaces himself in Bhagavth, Bhaagavatha and Acharya Kainkarya. Like the Brahmin from Srirangam, he is free of ego or arrogance, always humble and devoted to the Srivaishnava clan.

Ananthalwan's final sacred gift to the pilgrims visiting the Hills was the shrine for Ramanuja. The image was presented to Ananthalwan by Saint Ramanuja Himself on request and was consecrated after the Saint shuffled off his mortal coil. Consecration may be later in time but image itself is more ancient than those in Sriperumbudur, Srirangam and Thirunarayanapuram.

Ananthalwan rebukes Nanjeeyar for taking to Sanyas. For him liberation is attained by service to the community. Indeed Ananthalwan advises his disciple Vaishnava Dasa to spend his wealth for the upliftment of the poor and the downtrodden if he is to aspire for the grace of Lord Venkateswara.

Ananthalwan joined eternity with the Lord on the sacred Thiru Adi Pooram day. Even today, Lord Venkateswara visits the garden and bestows honours on the Magizha tree.

The Satari at the main sanctum sanctorum is known as Sadagopa in remembrance of Nammalwar. The one in the Ramanuja shrine is known as Ananthalwan.

The Vaishnava community always held religious beliefs as filling too vital a function in sustaining individual morality and morale and social order and control. Ananthalwan belonged to a different clime and a different age, but it was not blind faith but faith married to reason.

T.C.A.Ramanujam

Acknowledgements

This is one of the long cherished desires of the Vaishnava world to bring out in the languages apploicable for all, the life and history of Srivaishnava. Acharya especially the ones appointed directly by Sri Ramanuja in order to maintain the Divyadesa. This work “Thirumalai Ananthalvan A Biography” will certainly be helpful to minutely realize the idealism of the mission of Sri Ramanuja.

The Sri vaishnava must be grateful to sri T.C.A.Ramanujam who has taken pains to translate the verses of Ananthalvan and also the work rendered originally in Telugu by Sri U.Ve. Mahavidvan Purisai SriRangachariyar. Swami which was later translated into Tamil with an introduction by Sri.U.Ve.T.A.Krishnamacharya, a renowned scholar. A brief forward by Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari adds the flavour to this work. I express my sincere gratefulness to all these great souls.

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T.A.P.Krishnamacharya

SRIMATHE RAMANUJAYA NAMAH

INTRODUCTION

Bhagavad Sri Ramanuja dedicated himself to the Srivaishnava system of religion and spread the Gospel of Visistadvaita. He established seventy four prime Acaryas designating them as Simhasanadhipatis, who were all his chief disciples engaged in the task of preaching the Sanskrit and Dravida Vedanta Granthas. These Acaryas were exemplars of the Srivaishnava cult by precept and practice. Thirumalai Ananthalvan was one among the prominent Acaryas. He composed the Sri Venkatachala Ithihasamala. There are glorious references to the work of Ananthalvan in his Venkatachala Ithihasamala in the Arayirappadi Guruparampara prabhavam of Pinpalagiya perumal Jiyar, Ramanujarya Divya Caitra of Pillai Lokarya Jiyar, Vartamala and other ancient granthas. On the basis of such ancient literature and references, Sri Ubhayavedanta Vidvan Thirumalai Ananthanpillai Purasai Srirangachariyar Svami published a biography of Ananthalvan in Sanskrit under the title “Sri Venkatadri Srimad Anantharya Mahimakatha Sangraha”.

Srirangachariyar swami was known as a Chatus Sastra pandit and was compared to Vasista by virtue of his Anustana. At the turn of the century nearly about a hundred years ago, he was the chief Sthlacharya Purusa of the Thirumalai Tirupathi Devasthanam. The biography of Ananthalvan was published by him in 1882 both in Sanskrit and in Telugu. About half century ago, my ancestors translated the biography in Manipravala style. I obtained a copy of the Manipravala work from Kirtimurti Nyaya-Vedanta Mahavidvan Thirunarayanapuram akkarakkani Sri T.A.Sampathkumaracharya Swami and with his permission brought out this publication as Thirumalai Ananthalvan Vaibhavam in 1959 in easily understandable Tamil words and excluding Sanskrit terms.This was publishe as a serial in the then T.T.D. Bulletin. On my request, the Devasthanam published the work in book form to my delight.

BIRTH

Ananthalvan was born in 1053 A.D. in Citra Naksatra in the Tamil month of Citra in the year Vijaya at Siruputtur (Kirangur) near Mysore. His father Kesavacharya was a pious Srivaishnava belonging to the Yajur Veda Baradvaja gotra.

SEVERAL NAMES

His father christened him as Ananthan.As he grew in age, he became well-versed in Sastras and Vedic lore and was lost in the ocean of Bhagavad Bhagavata. Acharya Bhakti. He had no concern for the outside world. He therefore came to be known as Ananthalvan in the same way as Kuratalvan.Engal Alvan and Nadatur Alvan.

He surrendered before Sri Ramanuja at Srirangam and took him as his Acarya. As per his command, he climbed up the sacred Tiruvenkata Hills, laid a garden and dug a tank and a lake for the service of the Lord to ensure perennial supply of flowers. This was at a time when nobody dared to go up the Hills because the risk involved of difficulties associated with life on the Hills. Admiring his guts, Sri Ramanuja gave him the title"Anpillai "(the great man) He therefore came to be known as Anantanpillai.

Once when he was engrossed in making garlands for the Lord, the Lord sent for him to come to the sanctum sanctorum at once. Ananthalvan waited for sometime, completed the garland and entered the sanctum sanctorum. The Lord was furious at the delay and asked him what he would do if he were to banish him from the Hills. This was out of what is known in Sanskrit as "Pranayakopa" (anger in love) Ananthalvan submited before the Lord that he was in the Hills not to obey the Lord's commandments, but in obedience to the orders of his Acarya Emberumanar. The flowers would lose their fragrance by delay. They had to be

strung in to a a garland before they bloomed. This was the order of Sri Ramanuja. He was fulfilling his command and doing service to the Lord. In this regard he was only emulating the ancient sage Madhurakavi who knew of no other Lord except Nammalvar and worhsipped the Lord because that would please his Acarya Nammalvar. ”It is only to please my Acarya, Sri Ramanuja, “said Ananthalvan I am engaged in making garlands and serving at your shrine. I know of no other Lord except the Acarya from Srirangam. I always chant Madhurakavi’s kanninunchiruthambu and think constantly of my Acarya . You may consider me a dasa of Madhurakavi. Has not Nammalvar recited “paran sendru ser thiruvenkatamamalai (Thiru Venkata Hills where the Lord arrived from Sri Vakunth) After all you are as much a descendnt on the Hills as I am. You came little earlier and I came a little later. I am here to obey the orders of Sri Ramanuja and I will refuse to move out. I will continue with my service to you”The lotus eyed Lord was immensely pleased and applauded Anantalvan in describing himself as Madhurakavidasa. Since then the descendants and the disciples of Ananthalvan chose to add the term ‘Madhurakavidasa’ to themselves. Like Madhurakavi, Ananthalvan was also an Acarya dasa. Ananthalvan stood to Sri Ramanuja in the same term as Madhurakavi stood to Nammalvar.

When Ananthalvan went to Srirangam and prostrated before the Acarya Sri Ramanuja, he directed him to Sri Arulalapperumal Emberumanar. In implict obedience, Ananthalvan offered himself as a disciple before Arulalapperumal Emberumanar. From the moment he surrendered before Sri Ramanuja, Ananthalvan took him as all in all and every commandment of Sri Ramanuja was obeyed sincerely. This was the glory of Ananthalvan as a disciple.

Pillai Lokarya Jiyar points out that the 26th stanza of Upadesaratnamala of Sri Manavala Mamunikal refers to Madhurakavi being born in the Tamil month Citra under the constellation of Citra. Ananthalvan was Acarya Paratantra. The term Madhurakavidasa fitted him eminently. Just as there is Kovil Olugu about the

conduct of the rituals at Srirangam, there is a Tirumalai Olugu which lays down the rituals to be performed at the Hills as commanded by Sri Ramanuja(Ramanujarya divyagna") It mentions at page 82 that Emperumanar despatched Malaikuniya Ninra Araiyar from Srirangam to Tirumala for service during the Adhyanotsava time. It appears he directed that, the day after the Rappaththu festival concludes, the verses starting with Kanninuciruttambu should be recited separately.Ramanuja was always proud of the Madhurakavidasatva of Ananthalvan. For the ten days right from the Vaiguntha Ekadesi, the Lord was adored with Tiruvoymoli. The next day, like Madhurakavi, Anathalvan recited Kanninuciruttambu before the Lord and got the name Madrurakavidasa.

It is noteworthy that at Tirupathi in the Temple of Lord Govindaraja, there is single shrine for both Madhurakavi and Ananthalvan establishing the latter's Madhurakavidasatva.

The biography records that Lord Srinivasa introduced Himself as a disciple of Ananthalvan to the Srivaishnava pilgrims on their way up the Hills and to have called Himself as Madhurakavidasa. Further he chanted the two Taniyans and distributed holy prasada to pilgrims ostensibly at the behest of Ananthalvan. The episode is related in Chapter V of this book. Lord Srinivasa too seems to have been delighted by the term Madhurakavidasa.

ANANTHALVAN'S DEVOTION TO EMPERUMANAR

The Guruparampara prabhava and other works make it clear that Sri Ramanuja first sent Ananthalvan and then only he himself came up the Hills for worship of Lord Srinivasa. As Ramanuja was returning to Srirangam after worshipping at the Hills and after patting Ananthalvan for the excellent garden he has created, Ananthalvan was unable to bear the separation from his Acharya. Ramanuja made one Acharyavigraha of himself and after embracing the same, presented to

Ananthalvan. It was this idol that Ananthalvan consecrated at the left side of the main shrine on the Hills after Emberumanar left for his heavenly abode. The Venkatesa Ithihasamala at page 169 and 179 and the Tirumalai Olugu at page 84 record that with the permission of the Lord, the idol was installed and that at the end of the Adayanotsava, Kanninun ciruttambu was recited followed by Ramanuja Nutrantati the next day.

According to scholars, this is the earliest idol of Sri Ramanuja. The idols at Sriperumbudur, Srirangam and Tirunarayanapuram (Melkote) were no doubt installed around the last days of Sri Ramanuja. But then, the idol at Tirumalai Hills was presented to Ananthalvan by Ramanuja himself in his middle age during his first visit to the shrine. The service that Ananthalvan rendered by getting an idol of Ramanuja from Ramanuja himself and installing it to the chanting of the Ramanuja Nutrantaati known as 'Prapanna Gayatri' has ensured a permanent place for Ananthalvan in the history of Srivaishnavism. Ananthalvan himself had composed the Ramanuja Catusloki singing the glory of Ramanuja.

DEVOTION TO LORD SRINIVASA

Ananthalvan's devotion to the Lord of the seven Hills is indicated on several occasions in this work. There is an episode concerning the interpretation of the verse in Tiruvaymoli 6-5-7 (avan cinnamum tirunamamum ival vayangal Tirundave') The Ithu commentary on this verse points out that the sacred conch and the discuss and the very name Aravindalocana acquire meaning only when Parankusa Nayaki mentions the same. This is comparable to the name Thiruvenkadamudaiyan becoming meaningfull when Ananthalvan mentions the same. Ananthalvan brethes life into the name itself Nammalvar as "parankusa Nayaki sings the glory of Lord Aravindalochana of Tolaivillimangalam, a divyadesa in Tinneveli district.Ananthalvan's mention of Tiruvengadamudaiyan is compared to Nammalvar's reference to Aravindalocana.The srivaishnava world recognizes the deep attachement of Ananthalvan to the Lord of the seven Hills by this comparison made in the Idu commentary.

The Sri Venkatesa Ithihasa mala of Ananthalvan records the triumph of Emperumanar over the Saivites and points out that Ramanuja established the Thirumalai kshethra as a Vaishnavite shrine indicating that the Lord was Mahavishnu Himself. Ananthalvan was an eyewitness to the work of Ramanuja in this regard. His book Sri Venkatesa Ithihasamala is one more example of his deep devotion to the Lord.

ATTACHEMENT TO ANDAL

Once Ananthalvan was bathing in the very tank as Srivilliputtur known to have been used by Andal for both. Inside the tank, he appeared to search for something. Asked what he was searching for, he answered that he was looking for the sacred turmeric if any remaining in the tank (Thirumukkutam) after being used by Andal, during her bath. The episode is mentioned in the Tiruppavai Nalayirappdi commentary by Sri Thirunarayanapuram Ay. His devotion to Andal was so complete that it blinded him o the fact no turmeric used by Andal could survive four thousand years after her life. Ananthalvan is considered an incarnation of Adisesa. Adisesa is known to bear Mother Earth on it hood and Andal is considered an incarnation of Bhumi pirati   or Bhumi Devi Nacciyar or Sri Bhudevi. No wonder that Ananthalvan was deeply attached to Andal. Andal pines for union with Lord Srinivasa and sends the cloud, the rains etc. as messengers to the Lord. She appels to the cuckoo to call the Lord, and requests Kamadeva (Mnmatha-cupid) to take her to Lord Srinivasa. Her devotion inspired Ananthalvan in his service at the Hills. Ramanuja was known as Tiruppavai Jiyar and was reciting the Tiruppavai of Andal daily.Andal was known as his sister by tradition “Perumpudur mamunikkup pinnanal valiye”(Glory to the one younger to Sri Ramanuja”) Ananthalvan composed Goda Catusloki singing the praise of Andal.

PARASARA BHATTAR AND ANANTHALVAN

Ananthalvan was attached to Kuratalvan's son Parasara Bhattar. When Bhattar was on his way to Melkote to win over Vedanti and to make him his disciple, he was received by Ananthalvan at Siruputtur. Ananthalvan enquired of him why he undertook such an arduous journey. Bhattar explained to him that it was in fulfillment of Ramanuja's wishes that he was on this tour to convert Vedanti to the Visistadvaita school of Philosophy. Ananthalvan who was throughout with Bhattar having recognized him as the leader of the Srivaishnava clan, returned only after Bhattar won over Vedanti in the debate. The Arayirappadi Guruparamparaprabhavam elaborately mentions this incident. Bhattar came to be finally recognized as the king of Srivaishnavas, next to Emberumanar.

Once Bhattar was in Tirukostiyur. It was hot summer Ananthalvan took Bhattar on his lap in order to shield him from the hot sun. In the commentary on the first verse "Kavartalai" in Tiruvaciriya of Nammalvar, the eminent commentator Periyavaccan Pillai refers to Adisesa holding Sri Ranganatha on his lap like a fond mother would hold her baby and compares Ananthalvan doing the same for Bhattar at Tirukostiyur. Eyebrows were raised at Ananthalvan in his old age prostrating before a youngster like Bhattar and trying to shield him as if he was his servant. Ramanuja had taken the young Bhattar to the shrine of Sriranachiyar and prayed that he should be taken care of .He had advised his disciples to consider Bhattar as his successor and treat him as they would treat Ramanuja himself. Periyavachanpillai explains the background in his commentary that Kuratalvan's wife Andal has lost a baby earlier. Ramanuja prayed to Sriranganachiyar that such a calamity should not occur again. He appealed to Periyapiratti (Sriranganacchiyar to consider Bhattar as the child of

the Lord and bring him up accordingly). Bhattar came to be known as the son of Periyapiratti. This is how Ananthalvan used to refer to him.

Similar explanation is found in the Idu commentary on the Tiruvaymoli verse (10-6-1) “Arul peruvar adiyar” in the conversation between Accan and Illaiyalvan, when Acan pointed out that Ramanuja had ordained that Bhattar should be considered equal to Ramanuja himself. Suffice it to say that if the person was dear to Emberumanar, whether it be Lord Srinivasa, Andal or Bhattar Ananthalvan had deep devotion for such one.

Bhattar was equally devoted to Ananthalvan. Once when one of his disciples wanted explanation about Srivaishnavalaksana, instead of dilating on the subject himself, Bhattar sent the disciple to Ananthalvan on the hills. This is comparable to Emberumanar directing Kurattalvan towards Tirukkostiyur Nambi for learning about Jivatmalaksana .The episode finds mention in chapter VI of this book.

NANJIYAR AND ANANTHALVAN

Vedanti entered the Srivaishnava fold after Bhattar won him over in the debate. He came to be known as Nanjiyar. He took to Sanyasa. On the way to Srirangam, he prostrated before Ananthalvan in Siruputtur. Ananthalvan chided him for having taken to Sanyasa and stated that it was not necessary. Yet he blessed Nanjiyar that he would be born in Tirumantra and would be fostered by Dvaya Mantra. The episode is mentioned in Guruparamparaprabava. Vartamala and the commentary on Nacchiyar Tirumoli (7-2) Katalil Pirantu” Pillai Lokacharya mentions it in his works like Parantapadi, Sriyappatipadi and Tanidvayam. Ananthalvan meant that the Sanyasa stage was difficult to practice. That was not the only way to liberation. Association with Bhattar was sufficient to lead one to liberation. Surrender before Bhattar and realization of his preaching that the Jivatma is the seervanat of Paramatma would suffice. One should get svaruppajnana about one’s birth. The Dvaya mantra teaches us in the

Puravakhanda (1st line) that Mahalakshmi, also known as piratti is Purusakara and will help us to reach the lotus feet of the Lord. The Uttarakhanda (2nd line) tells us that Bhagvatkainkarya is itsef the beatitude of life .This was Ananthalvan's message to Nanjiyar. It shows how even as he was attached to Nanjiyar, he had profound regard for Bhattar.

THE LAST DAYS

In his last days, Ananthalvan's son known as Ramanujacharya assisted him in the Puspakainkarya to Lord Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. He had a long life (refer Venkatesa Ithihasamala page 153). Once Ananthalvan asked a disciple of Bhattr, which sacred name of the Lord was dear to Bhattar. The disciple spontaneously answered that it was Alagiya Manavalapperumal(this is the name by which the Srivaishnavas refer to Lord Ranganatha in Srirangam). Ananthalvan remembered the ancient prescription that a lady would not mention the name of her husband. The Alvars and Acharyas were steeped in the secret philosophy of bridal mysticism.The devotee can never mention the name Sri Rangaraja and therefore, the very mention of them Manavala produced immense ecstatic delicacy in Ananthalvan. Yet this was the name so dear and sacred to Bhattar. Ananthalvan shed his mortal coil and ascended Tirunadu (parampadam).This is mentioned in the introduction to the commentary of Periyalvar Tirumoli "Navakariyam" (4-4-1). It is not known how long Ananthalvan lived. He was younger to Ramanuja by 36 years.This is made clear by the Itihasamala. Emberumanar lived upto 120 years. It was after his demise that Ananthalvan installed his idol in the Tirumala Hills. It can thereforebe presumed that Ananthalvan lived atleast for 84 years. It was on the sacred Hills that Ananthalvan breathed his last. There is an Ananthalvan Vrindavanam on the Hills in the Ananthalvan garden. There is also a Makila tree (vakula) in the garden. According to tradition, it was on the Tiru Adi puram day that Ananthalvan breathed his last. Even today Lord Srinivasa with his Consorts comes in procession to the garden on the evening of Tiruvadi Puram and prasada is

offered on that occasion. At the time of His return, the Makila tree is offered flowers from the Lord and also Sri Sathakopa. Outside the Ananthalvan Thiru Maligai (the house wherein Ananthalvan resided), the Sri Sathakopa is bathed in holy water (Tirumanjana) and Lagu Samproksanam takes place. The Archaka goes to the Svami Puskarini for bath.This tradition which is carried on even today shows that the Makila (Vakula) tree is probably Ananthalvan himself reborn on the Hills. Kulasekara Alvar had wished to be born on the golden Hills in some form or the other.

Certain episodes about Ananthalvan obtained from ancient works have been recorded here. I am afraid to dilate at length because of my own ignorance. I pray that the elders, who go through the book, may forgive me for lapses if any.

T.A.KRISHNAMACHARYA

TIRUMALAI ANANTHALVAN- A BIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER-I

GOD'S GRACE

Lord SrimanNarayana is worshipped as Sriyahpathi in Srivaikuntha. Nityasuris like Adisesa, Garuda, Visvaksena and Muktas pay their obeisance to Him. In his joyous condescension, He willed that the common people of the world should also be blessed by the joy of doing Kainkarya. They are lost in Avidya and Ignorance. They know not their prowess. To shield them from evil, He gives them the discerning sense to separate the good from the bad. It is for this purpose the Lord spread the immutable and blemishless Vedas, the Smritis, the Itihasas , and Puranas. These people lost in the worldly chores do not get interested in knowing the sacred meaning of the Vedas and Smrtis. The Lord with a view to set an example to the people at large, in order to reform them, despite Himself being beyond birth and death, descends on the earth in several forms as Devas and also as humans. At all times, the Lord is intent on protecting mankind by His grace. On one occasion, He ordered Adisesa to take birth on the earth in human from to show the way to mankind.

THE BIRTH OF RAMANUJA

The Dravida Desa was reputed for the observances of Varanasrama Dharma, Sriperumbudur is a town near the river Palar in Thondai Nadu. Adisesa, obeying the command of the Lord, took birth as a son of Pious and Orthodox Brahmin Sri Kesava Somayaji of the Harita Gothra on the holy day of Tiruvadirai, in the month of Chaitra of the Tamil year Pingala, marked as the year 4118 of Kali Yuga, Salivahana, the twenty eighth Chatur Yuga of Vaivasvata Manvantara, in the first Sveta Varaha Kalpa.. The child was named as Ramanuja. He learnt the Vedas and Vedangas and took to Sanyas. He settled down at Srirangam attaining proficiency in both the Sanskrit Vedas and the Tamil Divyaprabandhas known as

the Dravida Veda. He churned out the essential meaning of these Vedasagara and brought out works like Sribhasya. His discourse covered such subjects like

1) the nature of the Jiva (Jivatma Svarupa)
2) the nature of the Godhead (Paramatma Svarupa
3) the nature of the end result to be attained (Purusartha Svarupa)
4) the nature of the path (Upaya Svarupa) and
5) the nature of the obstacles to be crossed (Virodhi Svarupa)

This was known as the five-fold path or the Arthapanchaka.

THE BIRTH OF ANANTHALVAN

Adisesa showers his grace on the devotees of Lord Narayana and guides them both by precept and practice, both by Upadesa and by Anusthana. Just as the Lord had embarked once upon a time on the twin Avataras of Nara and Narayana at Badrinath, Adisesa decided to take the twin forms as Ramanuja for purposes of preaching the gospel and as Ananthalvan for the purpose of showing the way by practice of the Kainkarya-dharma. Even as Ramanuja was born at Sriperumbudur, Ananthalvan was born to an orthodox Srivaishnava Brahmin Kesavacharya at Siruputtur, near Mysore on the bank of the river Cauvery nearly a thousand years ago in the Kali year 4154 in the Tamil month of Chittirai, under the constellation Chittirai (in the Tamil year Vijaya ,975 of the Saka Era) in the Bharadvaja gotra.

ANANTHALVAN TAKES RAMANUJA AS ACHARYA

Kesavacarya’s child was born with the Adisesa amsa and was named as Ananthalvan .Early in life, the boy grew up learning all the Sastras and all the arts. He became well versed in the Vedas and in the Divya Prabandhas. He was always found in the company of scholars and trained himself to be of service to the world of devotees. Having come to know of the fame and renown of

Bhagavat Sri Ramanuja at Srirangam at whose feet all Srivaishnavite Acharyas were doing service, Ananthalvan also decided, like the rivers joining the sea, to surrender himself at the feet of Saint Ramanuja, so that he may dedicate himself to the Srivaishnava cause. After all, both Ramanuja and Ananthalvan represented different facets of Adisesa, Ananthalvan took to the Saint even as Lakshmana took to Lord Rama or Satrughna took to Bharata. Along with Ananthalvan other disciples like Eccan.Tondanur Nambi and Marudur Nambi came to Srirangam.

Sri Ramanuja directed Ananthalvan and others to another Acharya, Arulalap Perumal Emperumanar for guidance in the Vaishnavite path. When they reached Arulalap perumal Emperumanar, he was aghast that Ramanuja should have ordained him to be their Acharya. I am too small to undertake this task" he said," This is like a heavy palm-fruit being tied around the neck of a small sparrow. I am not competent to be your Acharya. You should go back to Saint Ramanuja himself and surrender before him" .Ananthalvan continued to be with Saint Ramanuja for some time and was learning the Sashtras and the Vedas in his Goshti. Several Srivaishnavites admired the Anusthana Kainkarya and knowledge of Ananthalvan and prostrated before him.

ANANTALVAN REACHED THE THIRUMALA HILLS

Once Saint Ramanuja was delivering discourse on Nammalvar's Thiruvaymoli. While commenting on the hymn, "cindhu pu magilum Thiruvenkatam (3.3.2) (on Thiruvenkatam Hills, spilled flowers blossom.) Ramanuja put it to the concourse of disciples hearing him on Bhagavad Vishayam."Srirangam is known as Bhoga mantapam, the place where Lord enjoys Himself at the sight of the devotees on the banks of the river Cauvery. Kanchi is known as Tyaga mantapam, where the Lord sacrifices for the sake of his devotees. The Thirumalai Hill is known as Puspa Mantapam where the Lord is bedecked with flowers all the time. We should lay a garden for the service of the Lord and see that flowers are arranged

for daily worship .Is there anyone in this assembly of Acharyas who will be ready to undertake this service of laying a garden at the Hills for the sake of arranging flowers for the Lords?”

In those days, the Thirumalai Hills were known for Malaria It was a forest area and people were afraid to climb up fearing the onslaught from tigers. None of the assembled disciples was prepared to undertake the task. Breaking the silence of the audience, Ananthalvan rose and submitted before Ramanuja “Svamin, I cannot see your wish going unfulfilled. Let me have the proud privilege of doing the flower service (Puspa Kainkaryam) for the Lord of the Seven Hills. Let me be privileged to be bestowed by your Grace by this noble task of service at the Hills”.

Saint Ramanuja was overjoyed. He declared before the assembly. ”Here is Ananthalvan He does not care for the cold climate of the Thirumalai Hills. For him my order is above everything else. Having said this, he embraced Ananthalvan and told him” Anantha, you are the only An Pillai in this assembly” (you are the only man in the assembly) since then, the descendants of Ananthalvan came to be addressed as Ananthan Pillai Vamsasthar. The title of “An Pillai was bestowed on Ananthalvan by Saint Ramanuja. Ananthalvan left for Thirumalai Hills for Service.

CHAPTER-II

ANANTALVAN LAYS A GARDEN AT THE SEVEN HILLS

By the time Ananthalvan reached the Seven Hills, his name was already established as a great Acharya and a dear disciple of Ramanuja .He was worshipping the Lord of the Seven Hills every day, morning and evening. As per the command of Ramanuja, he started laying the garden with beautiful flowers. For this purpose, he also started digging up a lake and a small tank. He named the lake tank and garden after Ramanuja and was doing flower service at the temple. Ananthalvan by his service to the Lord of the seven hills became dear to the Lord in the Thirumalai Hills as Thirukkachi Nambi was to Lord Varadaraja of Kanchi.

THE LORD OF THE SEVEN HILLS TRIES TO HELP ANATHALVAN

Ananthalvan and his wife were digging the earth for creating a lake and the garden. The only thought in their minds was that that was a service dear to the Acharya Ramanuja. This time, Ananthalvan's wife was in the family way and still, despite her physical frailty, was helping her husband. She was carrying basket-loads of mud as per the instructions of Ananthalvan and throwing them at a distance. Lord Srinivasa was unable to bear the pain being undertaken by the lady and was moved by her devotion to the cause. He took the form of a beautiful young Brhamachari and came before Ananthalvan and told him "Oh Acharya, you have grown old. You are not in a fit condition to dig earth up. Your wife is also in full period of pregnancy and she will not be able to carry basket-loads of mud. Give me the spade. Let me help you in this task. I will dig the earth up and carry the basket-loads on my head. I will drop them at your desired place. The old couple that you both are may watch me and guide in this task". Ananthalvan

heard the youngster and replied to him," My dear young man, you are looking handsome and soft. You are full of ornaments and you are not able to carry even the weight of the ornaments on you .People like you are born delicate and will not be able to undertake arduous task of digging the earth and carrying the mud. You will be put to physical strain. This is a task which you cannot do. On the other hand, I am fit for this rough and tumble earth work. I will be put to strain if I do not do this job. Please do not interfere. If you want to render service to the Lord, you may do it separately elsewhere .If you come in my way, let me warn you, I will hit you with this spade.

ANANTHALVAN HITS THE LORD OF THE SEVEN HILLS WITH THE CROWBAR

The Youngman was taken aback at the wrath of Ananthalvan, and for a moment stayed aloof. However, after sometime, he saw the lady carrying the basket full of mud and walking slowly with infirm steps. He accosted her on the way and spoke to her sweetly taking away the basket of mud on his head. Thus the lady was able to hand over the basket of mud to the Youngman who in turn left it at the particular place. Ananthalvan found the work being done in half the time hence questioned his wife whether she was throwing the mud at nearer place instead of the appointed place. She told her husband how the young Brahmachari was helping her by preventing her from reaching the destination and taking away the basket from her thus doing the job himself.

Ananthalvan grew red in the face. He, overtaken by rage, ran after the Young man with the crowbar. He cried out to him" oh unknown youngster, you continue to interfere with my service in spite of my warning. You will pay for it". The young Brahmachari ran for his life as Ananthalvan was chasing him. The young man climbed up a big banyan tree and hid himself among the leaves. He beseeched," My dear Ananthalvan, spare me. Do not hit me. I have rich diamond and golden ear-rings. My garment is of golden tissue. I will give you all these things if you

spare me”. Ananthalvan thought for a moment and kept quite, “Let him climb down and start running as soon as he believes me. I will catch him then. ”So he told the lad,” All right I will leave you alone. You may come down. “The boy jumped down from the tree and started walking briskly even while turning his head backwards to see if any body was following him. A few minutes later he found that Ananthalvan was chasing behind in order to catch him. The young lad started running for his life. Being unable to catch him, Ananthalvan threw the spade at him. The spade hit him on his chin and he was profusely bleeding. However, he vanished into the temple, closing the door behind him. Ananthalvan waited for the boy to emerge from the temple. There was no trace of the temple door opening. The priests came to the temple for the evening Puja. Ananthalvan told them how the young lad had entered the temple and closed the door from inside. The priests shouted at the boy to come out of the sanctum sanctorum and open the door since it was time for the evening Puja. The door opened. Ananthalvan, the priests and other devotees entered the sanctum sanctorum. There was no trace of the boy. As they neared the Lord in the Garbhagriha, they found that even as He was all smiles, from His beauteous chin blood was oozing out.

ANANTHALVAN SEEKS THE LORD’S FORGIVENESS

Shocked at the spectacle of blood oozing out of the Lord’s chin, Ananthalvan wondered how this could happen and prayed to the Lord for an explanation. The Lord answered his prayers and told him,”My dear Ananthalvan, I wanted to partake of the service you were doing for me and for the devotees. You would not allow me to join you in the service. You were after me in rage and threw the spade at me which hit me on the chin. How can you forget it so soon? ”Ananthalvan was awe-struck and in fear begged of the Lord for forgiveness for what he did. He applied herbs and stopped the flow of blood. The Lord was supremely happy and told him” I am delighted at your complete dedication to my

service. You will have the Sesavastra (worn-out cloth), the diamond studded ring and the golden ear-ring as Honours from me".

Even to this date, the crowbar with which Ananthalvan hit the Lord is hung at right side of the entrance to the main gate of the temple and the Lord is adorned with Pacchaikarpura on the chin. This is distributed to the devotees as Sripadaremu.

RAMANUJA VISITS THIRUMALA HILLS

In srirangam, Ramanuja heard of the exploits of Ananthalvan and was pleased that his desire for having, a flower garden, a lake and a tank on the Hills for the service of the Lord has been materialised Report reached him about the dedicated service of Ananthalvan whose glory was spreading far and wide. He wanted personally to meet Ananthalvan and to appreciate him for whatever service he was rendering on the Hills. He was also eager to have Darsan of the Lord of the Seven Hills. He finished his Bhagavadvishaya discourse at Srirangam and started for Thirupathi. On the way, he worshipped at several Divya Deasas. On reaching Thirupathi, he worshipped all the Alvars and Acharyas at the Govindaraja temple. At that time, there was a ruler by name Vitthaladeva at Thirupathi. He became Ramanuja's disciple and extablished Srivaishnava dharma at Thirupathi. He made a grant of a village known as "Elaya Mandayam" near Thirupathi Ramanuja was discoursing at Thirupathi for several days. Ananthalvan was expecting him at the Hills. Finding that Ramanuja did not come up, Ananthalvan came down to Thirupathi and prostrated before the former. "Oh my Acharya, you are the king of Srivaishnavas. You should visit Thirumala Hills along with your disciples" prayed Ananthalvan Ramanuja replied to him, "I have been contemplating visiting the Thirumala Hills myself. I have however; a doubt The Hills became sacred because of the visit of the Alvars and Acharyas like Nammalvar, Thirumangai Alvar and others. Can I profane such a holy place visited by our Alvars and Acharyas? Why not I stay here at the foot of the Hills

doing service of the Alvars?" Ananthalvan did not expect this sort of response from Ramanuja. He was bewildered and told the Acharya," Svamin, if you do not climb up the Hills, how do you expect your dasas and devotees like us to do the same? If you, more sacred to us than anything else, do not climb up, we and our future generations will desist from going up the Hills taking it as Sistachara or the way of disciple. Will it not come in the way of Bhagavat kainkarya? I appeal to you to come up to the Hills"?

RAMANUJA CLIMBS UP THE HILLS

Ramanuja saw the point "Obviously, it is the injunction of the elders and our ancestors that we should climb up the Hills. I will come with you, my dear Ananthalvan," he said .He purified himself and after performing all the morning ablutions early in the morning and he came at the foot of the Hills and prostrated before them. He addressed the Lord thus, "My Lord, the Jiva on reaching Srivaikuntha as per your wishes climbs up the "Simhasana of Lord Narayana Himself from the pitha. The same way, as per the directions of elders, I am climbing up (with my feet) these sacred Hills to reach you. After all, the Vedas had declared "tan pathena adhyarohati" Forgive me for my transgression. "He started climbing up slowly (visitors of the Hills may remember that as we near the Hills a flight of steps is known as the knee-bending steps ie Mulangal Madippan). This is the place where Ramanuja is said to have climbed with his knees and not with his feet).As Ramanuja was nearing the top of Hills, Periya Thirumalai Nambi received him on the way with the Holy Thirtha and Prasada.. Ramanuja prostrated before Nambi and received the Temple Honours. Should you or Nambi yourself have come with these temple Honours. Is there no person junior to you to do this task?" he enquired. Periya Thirumalai Nambi replied," My dear Ramanuja, I searched in all the four Mada Vithis around the temple .There is nobody junior to me. Hence, I myself considered to be fit to carry here the Holy Prasada and other Temple Honours for you "Ramanuja was amazed at the humility and Prathibhakthi of Periya Thirumalai Nambi .As they were approaching

the temple, the *Jiyars,* Ekangins, Sthanadhipatis and others assembled before the temple and received Ramanuja with full Honours.

RAMANUJA WORSHIPS AT THE FEET OF THE LORD THIRUVENKATAMADAIYAN

Ramanjua took a holy dip in the Thirukkoneri and adorned himself with Urdhva Pundras. He went round the four Mada Street with all his devotees. At the south-western corner of the temple Ananthalvan had laid the garden, which excelled devaloka nandavana(celestial garden)and named it after Ramanuja. The saint entered the garden and found that the lake, the tank, and the garden were simply of breath-taking beauty and named after himself. Lost in wonder and at the brilliant work executed by Ananthalvan, the Saint told him "My dear Ananthan pillai, I have as my disciples so many Srivaishnavas who are all Jnana-Putras, but only because of you, I feel that there is glory to me and the Srivaishnavas". He embraced Ananthalvan once again and bestowed all honours on him. Along with Ananthalvan, Ramanuja worhipped at the shrine of Sri Varaha Nayanar and then entered the temple of Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. He prostrated at the Balipitham, the Dvajastambham and the Puspa-mandapam and also worshipped the Ananada-nilaya-vimhana. He entered the sanctum sanctorum. He worshipped the Lord from the holy feet to kiritam (padadi Kesa).The Lord was bedecked with all types of beautiful jewels of Navaratna, flowers, Pitambara and sandal paste The Lord appeared to him as Indranila ratna Kalpaka vriksha in full blossom on the top of the Hills. He was the consort of Alarmelmangai, His Consort always adoring his chest Ramanuja was reminded of the final decade of Nammalvar's Thiruvaymoli, sixth centum beginning with the famous hymn "Ulakamunda Peruvaya-the Lord who swallowed the earth". It was at the conclusion of this decade that Nammalvar chose to address the Lord of the seven Hills as "Alarmelmangayurai marba, in other words, the Lord whose chest is adorned by Mahalakshmi. "Ramanuja and his disciple recited these ten holy verses of Nammalvar at the sanctum sanctorum. After receiving Prasada, they

came out of the temple. At the request of Periya Thirumalai Nambi, Ramanuja stayed on the Hills for three days worshipping at the shrine all the time. During those three days, the worship of the Lord of the Seven Hills was his food. On the third day, Ramanuja went to the shrine for worship along with Periya Thirumalai Nambi. After reciting the hymns of Periyalvar's Thiruppallandu as Mangalasasanam, he was about to take leave of the Lord. He was honoured with His highly fragrant Sri Sathakopa. Thirtha and prasada The Lord blessed Ramanuja thus. 'My dear Ramanuja at the southern house in Srirangam we have already bestowed on you and your devotees the wealth of this world and the wealth of Srivaikunthas. There is nothing more that we can bestow on you now. Hearing the majestic voice of the Lord, Saint Ramanuja acknowledged that was the highest benediction that he could ever have. Ramanuja and Periya Thirumalai Nambi came down from the Hills and reached Thirupathi where they stayed on for one year. He learnt Sri Ramayana Rahasyarthas from Periya Thirumalai Nambi during his stay at Thirupathi. At the end of the year, Ramanuja who came from such a long distance was told by Peria Thirumalainambi that he had nothing more to deliver to the former. Ramanuja asked for a favour from Periya Thirumalai Nambi He told him ,"My dear Acharya if you are pleased to bestow anything more on me I seek the service of your disciple and servant Govinda Bhatta-Embar" May it please your Holiness to send govinda Bhatta along with me. Peria Thirumalai Nambi accordingly obliged Both Ramanuja and Embar again ascended the Hills. On the Hills, they joined Ananthalvan At the request of Ananthalvan, Ramanjua consented for an exact replica of himself to be made into a divya mangala-vigraha as per Sastras and embraced the idol. The idol was given by him to Ananthalvan. The job done, Ramanuja and his disciples started their way back to Srirangam. It is this idol of Ramanuja in due course consecrated by Ananthalvan now worshipped by devotees immediately after the darsan of the Lord of the Hills.

CHAPTER-III

A NEW BRAHMIN DISCIPLE

The name and fame of Ananthalvan spread far and wide to the southern parts, His Srivaishnava disciples heard that he was being entrusted with the noble task of doing service at the sacred hill of Thirumalai by saint Ramanuja. They also came to know of the glorious service being done by him up the hill. They were keen to meet him and to get his blessings. They undertook a pilgrimage to the seven Hills from the south. On the way, they were the guests of a Brahmin chieftain by name Valarttan Mangalamudaiyan in a village of the same name. He was pious and charitable and endowed with material prosperity. After feeding the disciples on the way to Thirumalai Hills, the Brahmin chieftain started following them up the Hills. He appealed to them to take him also as one among themselves. They did not respond to him immediately. All of them went up the Hills and prostrated before Ananthalvan to accept him as his disciple. Ananthalvan enquired of the Srivaishnavas about his antecedents. Coming to know of the keen desire of the Brahmin chief to be his disciple, Ananthalvan told him that he could not be given upadesa (the teaching from the Acharya to the disciple) because that was given only to those who had conquered the five senses and had controlled the mind. The Srivaishnavas who brought him to Ananthalvan pleaded with him to take him as a disciple pointing out how the Brahmin chief was pious and dedicated to the service of the Vaishnavite community. There was none else who was fit enough to be the acharya. They explained that they did not respond to his entreaties all the time because they felt Ananthalvan alone could decide on the matter. Ananthalvan relented and took the Brahmin chief aside. He told him that if he wanted to be his disciple and take upadesa, he should forego all his materials wealth in favour of the servants of God and ensure that the income and wealth were utilised only for such pious purposes. If he were to do that, he would win the grace that Ananthalvan himself received from the Lord. Valarttan Mangalamudaiyan agreed and considered

himself blessed. He had a quick bath and came back to the acharya. He received Pancha-Samskaras from him. He became an ardent disciple of Ananthalvan and came to be known by the name Srivaishnavadasa.

After receiving the benedictions of Ananthalvan and hearing his discourses for a few months. Srivaihnavadasa became even more pious. The milk becomes tastier when heated more. The ripened spikes in the paddy fields bend down before harvest. Like wise with the passage of time, ahamkara gets dried up more and more and wisdom grows. Humility is attained with vairagya. The same happened with Srivaishnavadasa. He spent whatever money he had brought up the Hills during the pilgrimage. Having not satisfied with this, he took leave of Ananthalvan and went back to his place. He divided his wealth into three parts and gave one part to his mother and one part to his father. He considered the rest as his own and returned to Thirumala Hills with the same after a year. He surrendered the wealth at the lotus feet of Ananthalvan. Ananthalvan blessed and appreciated him for keeping up his word remembering the promise made at the time of becoming a disciple.

But then Srivaishnavadasa reminded Ananthalvan that his part of the bargain alone had been completed and that Ananthalvan should bless him to get the Grace of the Lord as he himself had received in abundance from the Lord. This was the second part of the deal. Ananthalvan agreed and took him to sanctum sanctorum of Lord Srinivasa. He surrendered the monies, gold and silver brought by Srivaishnavadasa at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and told the Lord how, on his advice, Srivaishnavadasa had agreed to spend his wealth in the service of God and the devotees. He also explained that Srivaishnavadasa was to get in return the Grace of God. Ananthalvan reminded the Lord about the Carama Sloka in the Gita.

Sarva dharman parityajya Mam ekam saranam vraja
Aham tva sarva papebhyo Moksayisyami ma sucah”

(Surrender all your Dharmas unto me. Come to me with utter faith. I am here to take care of you)

Ananthalvan prayed that the Lord should bless Srivaishnavadasa as per the promise “ma sucah” The Lord obliged to Ananthalvan. After honouring him with Thirtha and Srisathakopa the Lord promised that after shedding the mortal coil, Srivaishnavadasa would reach Paramapada. Both were thrilled at the benediction of the Lord Srivaishnava dasa returned with Anandalvan to his abode immediately pleased at the turn of events. Ananthalvan taught him all the Rahasyarthas.

A few days later, the Lord’s Grace was to be bestowed on Srivaishnavadasa. The time was propitious Srivaishnavadasa had attained all the qualities necessary for Mukthi. At a festival time, the Lord was in procession along the Mada Streets. From his abode, Ananthalvan along with Srivaishnavadasa emerged to worship the Lord The latter heard the voice of the Lord that the time had come for him to ascend paramapada. Supremely happy, he prostrated before the Lord saying that he desired to be the sole of His sacred Feet and heard the Lord declaring ‘Nayami Paramam Gatim’(I take you to the Highest State) Thus Srivaishnavadasa came to receive the Grace of the Lord because of his being a disciple of Ananthalvan. Ananthalvan was wondering at the extreme Daya (Audaryam) of the Lord He performed the Caramakainkarya for Srivaishnavadasa.

CHAPTER -IV

THE SERPENT THAT BITES AND THE SERPENT THAT IS BITTEN

Ananthalvan was once plucking Tulasi leaves and flowers for service at the garden known as “Sri Ramanuja Nandavanam”.He was bitten by a serpent. He had his usual bath and carried on his service as if nothing had happened to him ignoring the well meaning entreaties of his disciples who wanted him to take medical attendance immediately to get rid of the poison. At the sanctum sanctorum, this became the subject matter of discussion in whispers. Lord Srinivasa questioned him as to why he did not make any effort to get rid of the serpent poison. Promptly came Ananthalvan’s reply, “My Lord, I have cleansed myself of serpent poison by an immediate bath in the Svami Puskarini. You want me to get rid of the poison .My Lord, I am bewildered, which poison should I get rid of? There is the vibrant cobra within me giving rise to Ahamkara and Mamakara. Should I get rid of the poison of this cobra or should I make effort to get rid of the poison of cobra which has bitten my body? The former poison is capable of destroying my soul. For getting rid of that poison, you alone can be the vaidya. I cannot go to an ordinary mortal to cure myself of this poison. The poison from the cobra which bit my body cannot harm my soul. It can hurt only my body. I pray for your guidance.” The Lord spoke to him thus,”you are very dear to me and I enjoy your company in the sanctum sanctorum day in and day out. If you decide to ignore our body and make no remedial efforts against the poison of the cobra. I willl be the loser. I appeal to you to get cured” Then came the famous reply of Ananthalvan ”why this mighty uproar about a trifle. If the bitter proves to be stronger, I would bathe in the waaters of the holy Viraja River and stand before the Lord of Vaikuntha. If the bitten one proves too tough, I would bathe in the sacred Svamipuskarinii on the holy Hills and stand before the Lord Srinivasa”.

Ananthalvan revealed on this occasion that he was an Amsa of Adisesa himself. For him, the benigin Grace of the Lord was ever present all the time and he believed that Lord Srinivasa was the all merciful and all powerful Dhanvanthari. He felt no need to go to ordinary mortals administering all types of medicines for the cure of cobra bite.

THE COMMAND OF THE LORD VERSUS THE COMMAND OF THE ACHARYA

Once Anathalvan was deeply engrossed preparing garland for the Lord. The Lord wanted to test him and his dedication. An Arcaka came from the sanctum sanctorum to the; Yamunatturaivar Mandapam where Ananthalvan was busy in the holy task. The Arcake conveyed to him the Lord's direction that Ananthalvan should immediately come to the sanctum sanctorum. Ananthalvan replied, The time is very precious to me and the flowers have to be made into a garland even when the buds are blossoming. Any delay will result in the flowers withering away and the service to the Lord will be impaired". The Archaka carried Ananthalvan's refusal to the Lord. Shortly thereafter, Anathalvan left the Yamunatturaivar Mandapa with a beautiful garland of flowers and reached the sanctum sanctyorum. The Lord feigned anger at Ananthalvan's refusal to respond to his command and the curtain was lowered between Aananthalvan and the Lord. Defying the curtain, Ananthalvan went into the Garbhagriha and wondered what angered the Lord. The Lord told him," My command can never by disobeyed, even by Brahma and Rudra. Today you flouted my command. What will you do if I banish you from the Hills? Not for me your garlands anymore, Ananthalvan replied, "My Lord, I am here to render service to you not at your beckoning. I have my Acharya Sri Ramanuja, who is the Lord of the Srivaishnavas. He has ordered me to serve you flowers and holy water. I prefer to obey the command of my Acharya to that of you.

“mayavi paramanadam tyaktva vaikunthamuttamam
svami puskarinitire ramaya saha modate

(The Lord with all wonderful Kalyana Gunas and plays left Srivaikuntha and came to rejoice with His Consort Alarmelmanga on the bank of the Svamipuskarini)

This shows that you yourself descended on the Hills from Srivaikuntha. You are not a native of the Hill. You came a little earlier and I came little later. May be you are the Lord of Srivaiknuntha and the Lord of the seven Hills. Bt then my Acharya Sri Ramanuja holds in his palm by your Grace, both this world and the world beyond. It is as per his order that I have come here to do the flower service to you. When, both you and me have come to the Hills within a gap of time just because you came a little earlier, can you drive me out of the Hills? I am carrying out the order of my Acharya. It is for you to decide whether you will have the garland of flower brought by me for your service I am leaving the garland here itself. ‘To me Madhurakavi is the example. As you know, Madhurakavi knew of no other God than his Acharya Nammalvar. I recite his Kanninum Sirutambu I am his Dasa” so saying, Ananthalvan left the garland at the Garbhagriha and was about to depart from the shrine.

Lord Srinivasa was moved, and holding Ananthalvan by the hand and adorning Himself with the garland. Pacified him and explained that. He was only testing his Acharya Bhakthi and his dedication to service. He granted him the Purusarthas which even Brahma and Rudra could not attain. Prostrating before the Lord and thinking himself to be the head of the blessed persons. Ananthalvan told him that nothing could please him more than the dedicated service at His feet and prayed that the service should continue for ever. Having captivated for his vairagya, The Lord assured him that for one like Ananthalvan who had surrendered before Sri Ramanjua, the Moksa Loka was always at hand. His disciples and his

descendants and even those remotely connected to Ananthalvan would be covered by His Grace, added the Lord.

After this episode, Ananthalvan's followers among the Vaishnavite clan increased. Those who had gone to the other Acharya wanted to have Ananthalavan's blessings. Ananthalvan realised that the Lord had blessed him and his descendants and followers only because of his Acharya Bhakthi which itself was an emulation of the Acharya that his descendants and followers should hence forth be known as Madhurakavidasa.

THE DEFILING OF THE GARDEN

It was Vasanta Rutu on the Hills. The Garden laid by Ananthalvan had become beautiful with different kinds of flowers and fruits and presented a colourful look. One morning Ananthalvan was aghast. The garden had been defiled. The flower plants were uprooted. The fruits were plucked and strewn hither and thither. The garden was in a chaotic state and presented an ugly look. Nobody could tell him how it had happened. The watchmen were helpless. The next night Ananthalvan was waiting with his disciples keeping a watch for intruders. That was the ninth night of Vasanta Ruutu. Ananthalvan was hiding underneath a bush. At dead of night, he saw a princely couple with beautiful ornaments roaming in the garden. For a moment he was overjoyed. But he was also overtaken by wrath and chased the couple. He dragged both of them in order to tie them up under a tree. The charming prince escaped from Ananthalvan's clutches. The princess however could not escape as she was fascinated by Ananthalvan's bakthi. Ananthalvan tied her underneath a Champaka tree and enquired of her antecedents"Why did you and your husband defile the beautiful garden? What is his name? Who is he? The lady answered, "I am like your daughter. I did no wrong. Me and my husband are the rulers of these Hills. My Lord wanders all over the Hills as he pleases. He has defiled your garden. I am not responsible for what has happened. Please spare me. You know the sastras. How can I mention

the name of my Lord? He is the culprit and not me. You cannot torment me like this. Please leave me free. Ananthalvan told her that she was trying to be clever and he wanted her to show him the chief thief who was her husband. She pleaded her inability to do so and wanted to be released. Ananthalvan told her,"It was after a long vigil I caught you. You look like Mahalakshmi. Verily, you are like a daughter to me. Your husband is sure to come searching for you. Let him come in the morning. I will take a ransom from him and then release you. Till then, you will have to be under the Champaka," Ananthalvan was holding vigil the whole night.

The next morning the Archakas opened the temple gate and went into the sanctum sanctorum for the morning rituals. They were amazed to note that the golden locket covering Alrmelmanga on the chest of the Lord was missing. The officials of the temple grew suspicious of the Archakas and started punishing them. At this point of time, the Lord's voice was heard by one of the Archakas pointing out that none of them was guilty of theft and that when the Lord and Alarmelmanga were playing in the Sri Ramanuja garden of Ananthalvan, they were caught by Ananthalvan. The Lord escaped, but Alarmelmanga could not. She was under the Champaka tree under the watchful eye of Ananthalvan. The Lord commanded the officers of the temple to go to the garden and get Alarmelmanga released and bring Ananthalvan to the temple. Promptly, the officers and the Archakas went to grove with the temple honours and were bewildered to see Alarmelmanga who was in the disguise of princess and Ananthalvan under the Champaka tree. In the Dvaparayuga, the Lord was tied to the mortar by Yasoda. The same way, in this Kaliyuga, Alarmelmanga was tied down to the Champaka tree by Ananthalvan. They conveyed to him the Lord's command. Ananthaalvan was feeling crest-fallen that he has done Apachara. He released Alarmelmanga and prostrated before her praying for forgiveness. Alarmelmanga told Ananthalvan that he should consider her as his daughter. Immediately, she transformed herself into a Kanya. Ananthalvan finishing his

morning oblations took the daughter with flowers and garlands in procession to the temple. He bowed before the Lord praying for mercy.

THE LORD TAKES THE DAUGHTER IN MARRIAGE.AS KANYASULKA THE LORD GIVES HIM A GARLAND

The young lady immediately transformed herself and adorned the chest of Lord Srinivasa. This was the origin of the tradition considering. Alarmelmanga as the daughter of Ananthalvan and the Lord of the Seven Hills as Ananthalvan's son-in-law. In the Tamil month of Purattasi, during the Rathotsavam, on the 8th day of Brahmotsava, it is customary even today to adorn the Lord with Pitamabara and silken cloth as Sambhavana of Ananthalvan,the father-in-law. There is a benediction to Ananthalvan

Malaiyil vengadavarkku mamanar valiye
Alarmelmangai tiruvukku appanar valiye
(Glory to Ananthalvan who is the father-in-law of Lord Srinivasa! Glory to Ananthalvan who is the father of Alarmenmangai!)

Once, Ananthalvan adorned the Lord with a long winding creeper which is full of fragrance. The Lord was immensely pleased and asked Ananthalvan how he looked with that type of adornment Ananthalvan explained, "My lord, you are like a fisherman catching the fish from the sea. You are the Lord of the seven Hills; this creeper reminds me of the noble task you have undertaken by spreading the fishing net far and wide to catch the Jivas lost in the Samsarasagara" The Lord was immensely pleased with this explanation.

The Lord was conversing with Ananthalvan quite often. He had crossed the limitation of Archavatara. The Upanisads describe him as "Sarva Gandhah", one full of sweet fragrance. Underneath the Ananda Nilaya Vimana, along with his

Consort Alarmelmanga, Lord Srinivasa kept conversing with his dedicated devotee Ananthalvan and the two were enjoying each other’s company.

CHAPTER -V

THE ANTS AS NITYASURIS

Ananthalvan was preparing to come down to the south in order to be in the midst of his disciples there. He took leave of the Lord of the seven Hills. He was accompanied by Varadacharya Bhagavatha and other Srivaishnavites. Feeling hungry he halted near a water-course to partake the food he had brought with him from the Thirumalai Hills. The food was found swarming with ants. He remembered kulasekara Alvar, who had sung"May I be born on the holy Hills as an insect, as a fish or as a step in the Garbhagrigha so that I may have the privilege of having Darsan of the Lord all the time". Ananthalvan told his disciples that it was not given to him to be born in the Seven Hills. He should not deprive those ants of the enviable distinction they had of their being eternally on the seven Hills. He returned to the Hills and left the ants there itself. The next day he started on his trip down south.

ANATHALVAN AT TIRUNARAYANAPURAM (MELKOTE)

Ananthalvan was at Thirunarayanapuram (Melkote) and worshipping at the temple. He was constantly thinking of the Lord of the Seven Hills and no wonder, the Lord at Thirunarayanapuram gave Darsan to him as Lord Srinivasa of Thirumala Hills. Ananthalvan wondered how the Lord had come down to Thirunarayanapuram from the seven Hills. The Srivaishnavas in his company also had darsan of Thirunarayana as Lord Srinivasa. They showered praise on Ananthalvan and his devotion to the Lord of the Seven Hills. Even now it is customary at Melkote for the Lord to be bedecked in the form of Lord Srinivasa on special occasions like Ekadasi and the birthday of Ananthalvan.

Anathalvan later on visited Kerala, preached the Gospel of Ramanuja, acquiring new disciples there. He was itching to return to the Seven Hills. As he was returning in the company of Varadacharya, he was feeling thirsty and hungry and was resting on the way. A young Brahmachari came to him with curd rice and other items of food and served him those delicacies telling him that those were the Prasadas sent by Lord Srinivasa from the Hills. Ananthalvan was amazed at the turn of events and requested the youth to serve the prasada among the Srivaishnavas in his company. After distributing the prasada, he himself took a mouthful of food and then disappeared. The Srivaishnavas realized that it was the Lord himself who had come to help them with food at a time when they were direly in need.

Ananthalvan had a number of affluent disciples. With their help, for the service of the Lord, he had the temple precincts renovated. New towers and Mandapas were erected. As the work was in progress, the architects were trying to remove a Champaka tree. Ananthalvan did not approve of the cutting of the trees. He told them that even the tree was a Nityasuri on the Hills. He addressed the Champaka tree and prayed for way to construct the wall around the temple. Simultaneously, he prayed to the Lord and slept that night. The next morning, and behold, the Champaka tree had given way for the construction of the wall. It is now known as the Champaka Prakara.

MUKTHI FOR TIGER

Ananthalvan was once having bath in the *Svamipushkarini*. As he ascended the steps, he was astonished to find that his upper cloth got entangled in the ears of a tiger on a Peepal tree. As he was trying to retrieve the upper cloth, the tiger remained motionless. The disciples told Ananthalvan that the tiger obviously did not want to release the upper cloth as it was desirous of the touch of the upper cloth of Ananthalvan who could deliver the tiger from bondage of the world. They appealed to him to confer heavenly boon on the tiger. Ananthalvan blessed the tiger and got his upper cloth released. The tiger was found dead on the way. The disciples did Caramakainkarya for the tiger. When the disciples

entered the sanctum sanctorum along with Ananthalvan, they were amazed to find the form of a tiger in the Garbhagriha. The Lord humorously mentioned to Ananthalvan,” You have started blessing even tigers with Moksha which is difficult even for Devas. What work will the Lord have thereafter? Ananthalvan may enjoy himself on the Holy Hills and the Lord may depart.” Ananthalvan prayed to the Lord and told him that it was only because of the Grace of the Lord he was able to liberate the tiger. Was it not true that the Lord had bestowed on even the associates of Ananthalvan the Blessing of his abode?

VISIT OF TIRUMALAIYAPPAN TO ANANTHALVAN’S THIRUMALIGAI

Once, Ananthalvan was down with fever and was not able to attend to his daily chores. The Lord was missing him. The Archakas and Ekangis went to him along with physicians. They told Ananthalvan that the Lord had sent them to cure him and attend on him when he was sick. Ananthalavan mocked at the way the Lord had sent His emissaries to enquire of him when he was sick. He said,” Is it possible to engage a third person to do one’s own Sandhyavandanam? Is it fair for Lord Srinivasa to send third parties to enquire of him? Ananthalvan is not in need of physicians. His sickness is not something which can be cured by them. They may return.” The Ekangis and the Archakas returned to the temple and conveyed what Ananthalvan had told them. The Lord in his mercy and compassion rushed to Ananthalvan’s abode and graced him by his enquiries Ananthalvan was not easily taken in and he remained silent. The Lord enquired whether the silence was due to his sickness or due to his anger that the Lord did not come at the first instance. Feeling the touch of the Lord’s holy Hasta and being bathed by the grace of his Lotus eyes.Ananthalvan got up and told the Lord that he felt redeemed by the Lord’s presence and was back in physical fitness. It was only the Lord who could cure him of all sicknesses. He prayed to the Lord to forgive him for having remained silent for a few seconds. ”After all”, he said” this type of sin is not new to me, since I am given to frequent births. The Lord can condone, in a trice, even sins which cannot be washed away over a

thousand year's penance" Ananthalvan fell at the feet of the Lord. The Lord blessed him and disappeared into the Garbagrigha.

THIRUMALAIYAPPAN'S TANIYAN FOR ANANTHALVAN

On one occasion, several Srivaishnavites were ascending the Hills, coming from Srirangam to worship Lord Srinivasa. When they were feeling tired, a young Bhramachari came to them and served the temple prasada. The srivaishnavites were trying to find out who he was before they received the prasada. The young lad replied that he was a Srivaishnava and was known as Madhurakavidasa and a disciple of Ananthalvan. It was Ananthalvan who had sent him to feed them with the Prasada having come to know of their plight through the pilgrims The prasada was straight from the temple sent by Ananthalvan and they could have freely enjoyed the same. Still not satisfied, the Srivaishnavas asked the young lad to recite the Taniyan of his Acharya.
The young Bhramachari recited

Akhilatmagunavasam ajnanatimirpaham
Asritanam susaranam vande Anantharyadesikam"

(I bow to Acharya Ananthalvan, who is the repository of knowledge, acara, mercy and wisdom, the one who removes ignorance and is eminently suited for surrender by disciples)
The Srivaishnavas then questioned the youngster how his taniyan made no reference to Ananthalvan's connection to Ramanuja. Was the young lad trying to fool them by reciting a sloka composed then and there? The Bhramachari replied that there were two. Taniyans in praise of Ananthalvan, one referring to the glory of his character and another referring to his connection with Ramanuja. The second verse ran as under.
'Srimath Ramanujacharya Sripadamboruhadvayam
Sathutha manga sandaryam Anantharyamaham Bhaje

(I prostrate before Ananthalvan who is equal to the lotus feet of Sri Ramanuja and who is worshipped by Srivaishnavas all the world over)

The Srivaishnavas were convinced that the youngster was a true disciple of Ananthalvan and received the prasada from him .The young lad took leave of them and returned to the Hills. Slowly, the Srivaishnavas ascended the Hills and were received by Ananthalvan at the entrance. They told him that they were grateful to Ananthalvan for having sent prasada through one of his bright young disciples. Ananthalvan was bewildered. He had not sent any prasada, nor had he engaged any young disciple for this task. He was totally in the dark. Obviously, Lord Srinivasa had helped them n their hour of trouble. That was all His Lila. The young Brahmachari obviously was Lord Srinivasa Himself. He wanted to know more about him .The Srivaishnavas explained how hey doubted the credibility of the youngster and put him too test. They told him that he had declared himself as his disciple, as Madhurakavidasa and had recited two slokas in his praise and he had left them a little earlier and he should be in the temple precincts. They recited the two verses before Ananthalvan.The entire assembly was wonder struck.They realised that the Lord had declared himself as Ananthalvan’s disciple and chosen the name Madhurakavidasa .Even though there were so many others. Acharyas and Simhasanadhipathis, the second verse showed that it was Ananthalvan who could be fittingly considered equal to the Lotus feet of Sri Ramanuja. From then on, the paduka (sathari) at the shrine of Ramanuja up the Hills came to be known as Ananthalvan since then the two verses became famous as the Taniyans in praise of Ananthalvan

CONSECRATIONOF THE IDOL OF SAINT RAMANUJA

Ananthalvan was spending his time constantly thinking of Acharya Sri Ramanuja and his Commandment. He had organized the recitation of the Divya Prabhandas of the Alvars at the temple throughout the year in fulfillment of the wishes of the Acharya obedience to the call of the Acharya was the summom

Bonum of Ananthalvan's life. Imagine the shock he had when he heard that Emperumanar chose to rest in God at Srirangam and could no longer be seen in flesh and blood. For one year, unable to swim out of the ocean of sorrow, Ananthalvan did not worship Lord Srinivasa. The Lord himself was unable to bear the separation from Ananthalvan He sent for him through his Archaka and tried to console him over the loss of Sri Ramanuja. He told him that the loss was greater for the Lords at Thirupathi, Kanchi, Srirangam and Thirunarayanapuram. He promised Ananthalvan to take the place of the Acharya and to help him serve the Srivaishnava community at large in the same manner that Ramanuja wished. Ananthalvan reminded the Lord how at the instance of Sri Ramanuja the Lord got back the conch and the Disc which he had given away to Tondaiman Chakravarti. At a time when people were being misled about the true nature of the temple on the Hills. It was Ramanuja that conquered the various sectarian religions and established the temple as his seat of Srivaishnavism. But for Sri Ramanuja, the seven Hills and the temple there on would not have attained any glory at all. It was Ramanuja who propitiated the Lord even in the opening verse of his Sribhasya and referred to the Lord as Brahmani Srinivase "For all the service rendered by Ramanjua the Lord should grant Ananthalvan a boon that during the Adhyayanotsava festival, just as the hymns of Nammalvar and Thiruvmangai Alwar wre recited, the 108 verses praising the glory of Ramanuja known as Ramanuja Nutrantadi or Prapanna Gayatri shoud be exclusively heard one day at the sanctum sanctorum of the Lord and further, to compensate for the loss suffered on the Hills due to the absence of the idols of Alvars who had sung in praise of the Lord, Ramanuja's own idol should be installed close to the Sanctum Sanctorum which should help to establish Srivaishnavism on a permanent footing on the Hills and blessings of Ramanuja would always be available for generation to come for pilgrims visiting the shrine. Ananthalvan therefore prayed for permission to install Ramanuja's idol on the Hills. The Lord was supremely happy. He granted him both the boons. He agreed that he would listen to the recitation of Ramanuja Nutrantadhi during the Adhyayanotsava festival for one day. He also ordained that the idol of Ramanuja should be

consecrated close to the shrine .Accordingly; the idol was installed the day after the recitation of Madhurakavi Alvar’s Kanninunciruttambu and from then on Ramanuja Nutrantadi has been recited on that day every year at the sanctum sanctorum. The consecration was as per the Vaikhanasa agama and shrine is on the left side of Garbagriha.

True to the Taniyan

Srimadramanujachaya sripadamboruhadvadyam
Sadhuttaamangasandharyam anantharyamaham bhaje”

Ananthalvan named the Holy Feet of Ramanuja after himself Earlier, Embar had styled himself as Ramanuja’s Holy Feet.

Ramanuja padachcharya Govindhavanapayini
Tadayattasvarupa Sa Jiyanmadvisamasthali”

The same way Mudaliyandan had also named after the holy Feet of Ramanuja.

Paduke Yatirajasya kathayanti yadakhyaya
Tasya dasaratheh padau sirasa dharayamyaham”

Because of the glory of the Seven Hills and the abiding love and regard that Ananthalvan had for Ramanuja, the name Ananthalvan stuck to the padhuka (sathari) at the shrine of Ramanuja on the Hills.
Ananthalvan was carrying on as usual the service of the Srivaishnava Dharma. The Divya Prabandhas came to reverberate the Holy Hills from all directions and discourses were organized from time to time.

CHAPTER-VI

THE HALLMARK OF SRIVAISHNAVA

The inheritors of the mantle of Sri Ramanuja had come to know of Ananthalvan both as a contemporary and an Acharya very dear to Sri Ramanuja himself. Ananthalvan himself had become a respected elder of the community, but confined to the Thirumalai Hills doing service to the Lord as per the command of his Acharya. Srirangam continued to be the seat of Srivaishnavism. Kurattaalvan's son Bhattar was widely regarded as the successor to Sri Ramanuja in preaching the Gospel from Srirangam. A Srivaishnavite devotee went to Bhattar and sought the definition of a true vaishnavite. Bhattar, instead of explaining the concept of a true Vaishnavite, directed the disciple to go to Thirumalai and to know the definition directly from Ananthalvan. The Vaishnavite Brahmin went all the way from Srirangam to Thirumalai Hills and prostrated before Ananthalvan conveying. Bhattar's instructions to him. Ananthalvan did not reply immediately, but ensured that the Brahmin stayed with him for six months on the Hills. On one occasion, at the concourse of devotees having the daily. Tadiyaradhana at Ananthalvan's Thirumaligai there was huge number of Srivaishnava in two batches for lunch.The Srirangam Brahmin was sitting in the first batch for food. To test his mental attitude and discipline, Ananthalvan asked him to get up and join the second batch and at the second batch he asked him to join the third and so on. Finally he was asked to wait for some more time since there was no place. The Brahmin remained totally unaffected by what many would have considered an insult. He remembered the directions of his Acharya Bhattar and felt happy that he had come to the Thirumalai Hills to get a ready answer to his doubts. Ananthalvan was constantly watching him throughout. At the end, Ananthalvan was convinced that the Brahmin was fit enough to receive Upadesa about the qualities of a true Srivaishnava. He took him by his side as he was himself about to take lunch. He told him how six months had passed since

he had come from Srirangam and said,” A true Srivaishnava is like a crane, like a cock and like salt. He will be like you. You may go to Bhattar and seek further clarifications from him. He will explain you the meaning.” The Bhramin returned to Srirangam and repeated to Bhattar the definition given by Ananthalvan. Not being able to comprehend the meaning, he wanted Bhattar to explain to him what Ananthalvan had in mind.

Bhattar explained the four different ideas of Ananthalvan.The crane resides in a tank, a lake or a river, all places full of water. A Srivaishnava will always reside on the bank of a river. The crane is all white in colour. The Srivaishnava is pure both in body and mind and is comparable to the spotless white of the crane. The crane watches small fishes swimming by but ignore the same waiting for the big one to arrive to feed its hunger. The Srivaishnava ignores ordinary mortals and awaits the arrival of a true Jnani, so that he may surrender to that Mahatma through his devotion and service. He would prefer to listen to wisdom of such a jnani. During the rainy season, the crane runs away from the sea-side and takes shelter near a tank fearing floods and lightning. A Srivaishnava, if he fears any harm from his relations or others, will move away to another Divya Desa.

The cock picks up good grains from the dustbin and feeds its young ones. Nammalvar is a divine cock. The Vedas had several divisions, many of them precious and many others not so precious. Many of the parts in the Vedas cannot be considered as of universal appeal. Some may not be fit to be recited by certain classes of people. It was left to the genius of Nammalvar to pick out the gems of wisdom from the Vedas as the cocks pick up the grains from the dustbin. Nammalvar gave such Prabhandhams like Thiruviruttam, Thiruvachiriyam, Periyatiruvantati and Thiruyvoymoli for the universal enjoyment and upliftment of mankind as a whole. This Nector (amruta) of Nammalvar was made available to Sriman Nathamunigal, who considered himself as Nammalvar’s child. At the instance of Nathamunigal, the verses of Nammalvar were made available for posterity. Thirumangai alvar gave us the Vedangas through his verses. A true

Srivaishnavite holds the Divyaprabandhas of the Alvars and the work of the Acharyas like Nathamunigal, Alavandhar and Emperumanar as very dear to him just as the chicks hold on to the grain given by cock. The Srivaishnavite spends his life contemplating on the wisdom enshrined in these hymns.

No offence was meant to the Veda's in this explanation given by Bhattar. The truth is that the Acharyas who came after Ramanuja attached importance only to Moksha Sadhana or Liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. For them Sriman Narayana is the one and the only God. They will never compromise and worship any other deity. It was in this meaning that Nammalvar is said to have separated the grain from the chaff when he chose to sing the Thiruvoymoli and other Divyaprabandhas in praise of Lord Narayana. Not for him the worship of other deities whose praises is sung in the Vedas. Not for him goals other than liberation which are described in the Vedas.

The Vedas have different purposes. Those who are not fit for aiming at liberation as the ultimate goal could still be roped in by Vedas by directing them to other deities. It will do them good. A sick man is administered medicine clothed in sugar or sweets. It is only those cured of such sickness who can aspire for higher aims in the life beyond. The purpose of the Vedas was to reform the individual depending on their status and their mental make up. The reference to other deities has its own purpose to be served. It is only when a high level of consciousness is attained that an individual can aim at liberation and union with Lord Narayana. The Vedas talk of Sacrifices which will be useful in re-birth. They talk of Indra, Brahma and Rudra who all confer different types of blessings and boons on their devotees. All are dear to Lord Narayana. These blessings are ephemeral Sarveswara as Sriyapathi is imminent and eternal. He is the only God to be aspired or. He is the only person fit to be contemplated. He alone can confer everlasting bliss. There is no conflict involved between the Vedas and the Divyaprabandas. The other deities whose glory is sung in the Vedas are but the limbs of Lord Narayana himself. .Devotion to these deities will of course yield

results. It is only those who seek liberation or Moksha who will consider the prayer to other deities as irrelevant. It is in this sense that the cock is referred to as a simile. It is also significant that it is not easy to understand the meaning of the Vedas

Ananthalvan had compared a true Vaishnavite to salt. There cannot be more apt comparison. Excess of salt or its deficiency will immediately be spotted in food. A perfect admixture of salt in food will make its presence hidden. A true Srivaishnavite makes the Acarya happy, ever smiling by his devotion, dedicatin and discipline. He never projects himself as a significant person either before the Acharya or in any assembly. He is humble and self-effacing just like salt. Even if somebody blames him in an unjustified manner; he owns the fault and prays for forgiveness. He is constantly trying to reform himself and attain a higher state of consciousness. The salt dissolves itself in food and becomes useful thereby. A true Srivaishnavite effaces himself in Kainkarya to Bhagavan .Bhagavatha and Acarya.

Finally, Bhattar tells his disciple that the way he conducted himself at the thadhiyaradhana arranged by Ananthalvan showed him to be a true Srivaishnavite. He came off as a person absolutely free of ego or arrogance, always humble and devoted to the Srivaishnava clan. He never considered himself superior. He never took offence when he was asked to get up from one batch to another. He himself represented the quintessence of a true Vaishnavite.

ANANTHALVAN, BHATTAR AND NANJIYAR

In Melkote, there was a scholar by name Vedanthi whose reputation had spread far and wide. Ramanuja in his old age had known of Vedanthi and had thought of bringing him round to the Visistadvaita School of philosophy. He had no time to meet him He had however conveyed his intention to Bhattar in Srirangam.

Ananthalvan was at his native place during sojourn to the south. Bhattar sent word to Antnathlavan that he was proceeding to Melkote to win over Vedanthi and sought Ananthalvan's blessing in the venture. Ananthalvan was at Siruputtur and received Bhattar and his disciples with a lot of affection and regard. He embraced Bhattar and blessed him hi his noble venture. He also accompanied Bhattar to Melkote and was present at the great debate which lasted for several days and concluded in the triumph of Bhattar over Vedanthi. Bhattar returned to Srirangam leaving. Ananthalvan on the bank of river Cauvery at Siruputtur after the conquest.

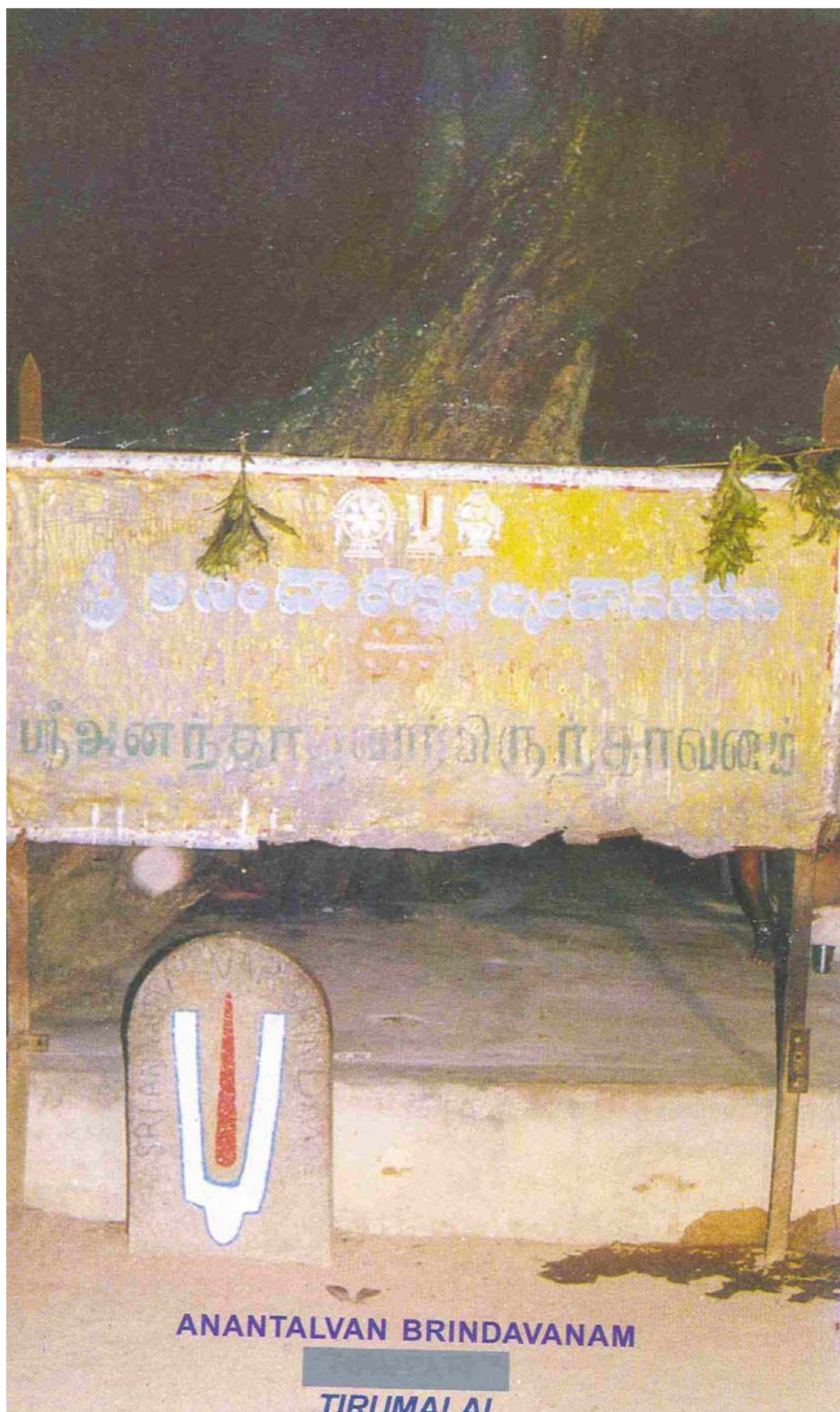
Vedanthi chose to embrace the order of the sanyashin. He divided his wealth into three parts and gave 2/3 to his two wives. He took the balance share as his offering tobe handed over to his Acarya Bhattar at srirangam .On his way at Siruputtur, he prostrated before Ananthalvan. Ananthalvan was taken aback to find the transformation of Vedanthi into a Sanyasini " Why this transformation? You are of soft delicate structure. Is this necessary to attain Moksha? Is it not enough if you merely surrender before Bhattar to attain moksha? Why not try to be normal, bathing when sweating and eating when hungry? Why his Sanyasasramam which is difficult to keep up? But then I am trying to build a dam after the floods have breached. You have already embraced Sanyasa. May you be blessed in your new Sanyasa Asramam. You are now born in Thirumantra aand brought up in Dvaya Henceforth you will be a Dvayaika Nistha.The Thirumantra produces Atmasvarupa jnana and makes one realize that he is the servant of Lord Narayana. The Dvaya Mantra develops a keen desire for kaainkarya," thus Ananthalvan gave the true meaning of Srivaishnava Siddantha to Vedanthi and sent him to Srirangam. He himself returned to Thirumala Hillls, along with his disciples.

ANANATHALVAN'S ADDRESS TO HIS DISCIPLES

At Thirumala, just like Ananthalvan, his chief disciples also had grown old. They were keen to return to their native place and informed him that they would like to

have his blessings. Ananthalvan spoke to them about the need for Satsanga. Evil company is be dreaded Satsanga, as explained by the sruthi” sada pasyanti will produce the experience of Para Brahman. Evil company will produce disaster Ananthalvan quoted the story of Saunaka and other sages. The ascetics were on a pilgrimage and had to spend a rainy night in the midst of a forest at a hunter hamlet. The hunters were away from the place. A parrot spoke from inside and insulted the seven ascetics asking them how they dare to enter the hamlet when there was nobody in. The parrot admonished them and asked them to get out. They left the hamlet and took shelter under a banyan tree. The parrot followed them and again insulted them asking them to leave the place. It called them by name and abused them as thieves. Unable to bear the insult, the seven mystics walked at dead of night in the rain and reached the hermitage of another Rishi. The Rishis had gone out for a bath, since it was about to dawn Here they heard another parrot. The parrot spoke to them with kindness and regard and inquired of their welfare. It offered them fruits, sacred water and place to rest comfortably, It also received them with Vedic honours. Saunaka told the parrot about their miserable experience at the hunter’s hamlet where they were insulted by the pet bird of the hunters. They were pleasantly surprised about the difference in treatment and wondered how two parrots belonging to the same kind, behaved in a totally diametrical fashion. The parrot told him that both were born to the same parents. The Rishis brought up one and the hunter the other. The parrot brought up by the Rishis knew how to receive guests and was always listening to the Vedas and Upanisads and the debates about their inner meaning. The parrot in the hunter’s hamlet knew only about killing, dividing and eating. It is the association that cultivates the good or bad qualities in the character. Sauaka was supremely happy and blessed the Parrot. Ananthalvan recited the story from the Upanisads to bring home the need for Satsanga. Association with elders, scholars and pious people will result in brahmanubhava. It is Satsangha that we should aspire for in our life. The disciples took his word as gospel and pledged to abide by his command.

Ananthalvan spent the last days as usual in the service of Lord Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. On the sacred birthday of Saint Andal in the Tamil month of Adi, Ananathalvan merged with Lord Thiruvenkatamudaiyan. Even today we can see temple honours being bestowed on the Magila Tree in the garden where Ananthalvan breathed his last on the sacred Hills.



ANANTALVAN BRINDAVANAM

TIRUMALAI



MADHURAKAVI ALVAR & ANANTALVAN
DURING PROCESSION ON SATRUMURAI (BIRTHDAY)
TIRUPATI